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The Career Experiences of Football Association Coach Educators: Lessons in Micropolitical Literacy and Action

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Abstract

Coach education has been the subject of increasing investigation in recent years. While such inquiry has provided important insights into coaches' engagements with various forms of coach education provision, coach educators' perspectives have remained curiously absent from the literature base. This study provides rich insights into the ways in which four Football Association (FA) coach educators interpreted their everyday workplace relationships with various significant others (e.g., their line managers, colleagues, and coach learners). In-depth, cyclic interviews were utilised to generate the data. The transcripts were iteratively analysed using symbolic interactionist and dramaturgical theorisations of social life. The analysis highlighted how the participants' interactions and identity management were influenced by their understandings of others' expectations of acceptable workplace performance, as well as their own career related aspirations. Here, the participants demonstrated a nuanced ability to 'read' and 'write' themselves into the micropolitical and uncertain terrain of coach education work. It is hoped that this study highlights the utility of symbolic interactionist and dramaturgical theories to the critical examination of coach education work and, relatedly, how such inquiry could be used to assist in the preparation and on-going professional development of coach educators.

Keywords: coach educator, coach education, dramaturgy, micropolitics, symbolic interaction.

Introduction

Coach education is a ‘hot topic’ of academic inquiry (Cushion, 2007; Cushion et al., 2010; Nelson, Cushion & Potrac, 2013). To date, much of the available coach education literature has addressed two inter-related topics. The first concerns coaches’ experiences of, and the value they attach to, coach education programmes. Here, the available research has illuminated how coaches often find course content and espoused approaches to coaching to be disconnected from the everyday realities and dilemmas that characterise their respective coaching environments (e.g., Chesterfield, Potrac & Jones, 2010; Jones, Armour & Potrac, 2003; Lewis, Roberts & Andrews, 2018). The second focus of investigation has been on providing ideas for improving the ‘impact’ of coach education and development programmes and is characterised by the presentation of, as well as argument for, a variety of theoretically informed ‘solutions’. These have included the potential utility and application of competency-based programmes (e.g., Demers, Woodburn and Savard, 2006), problem-based learning (e.g., Jones and Turner, 2006), mentoring (e.g., Jones, Harris and Miles, 2009), model-based instruction (e.g., Roberts, 2010), and communities of practice (e.g., Stoszkowski & Collins, 2014), among others. Despite the welcome and important insights provided in the research outlined above, our critical understanding of coach education, inclusive of the relationships and interactions that comprise it, remains largely embryonic (Cushion, Griffiths & Armour, 2019).

Coach educators are widely acknowledged as the public ‘face’ of coach education provision (McQuade & Nash, 2015). It is they who are tasked with delivering formal coach education programmes and certifying the learning and proficiency of coach learners (McQuade & Nash, 2015). However, while much attention has been given to exploring the thoughts, feelings, and actions of coach learners in coach education scholarship, scant attention has been given to those of the coach educator (Cushion et al., 2019). In contrast to

the engagement with the micropolitical and emotional dimensions of practice in the wider coaching literature (e.g., Gale, Ives, Potrac & Nelson, in press; Nelson, Potrac, Gilbourne, Allanson, Gale & Marshall, 2014; Potrac & Jones, 2009; Potrac, Mallett, Greenough & Nelson, 2017; Potrac, Jones, Gilbourne, Nelson & Marshall, 2013; Thompson, Potrac & Jones, 2015), there remains a paucity of research addressing the perspectives, interactions, and experiences of coach educators (Cushion et al., 2019). This state of affairs is somewhat perplexing, especially as the professional and organisational goals that coach educators are expected to facilitate are ultimately achieved (or not) through social interaction with others; who may not only have different values, interests and preferences, but who may also be prepared to act upon them (Cassidy, Jones & Potrac, 2016). Indeed, the work of coach educators is, arguably, a complex relational activity that requires them to make connections to and from other people, as much as it does to different knowledge bases and practical ideas (Cushion et al., 2019; Jones, Potrac, Cushion, & Ronglan, 2011).

Reflecting the recent scholarship of Cushion et al. (2019), this paper challenges the often sanitised and overly functional representation of coach educators' work by providing new insights into the ambiguities, dilemmas and challenges that are a feature of their engagements with others. Specifically, in-depth, cyclic interviews were utilised to examine 4 coach educators' perspectives on a) the importance of building positive working relationships with key stakeholders (i.e., line managers, co-tutors, and coach learners), b) the interactional strategies used to develop such relationships, and c) the emotional dimensions that were a feature of their strategic interactions with these others. The significance of this work is, then, grounded in the desire to illuminate some of the ways in which "cognition, self, context, ethical judgement and purposeful action (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 996) interact in the everyday 'doing' of coach education work. Such insights are crucial if we are to build a knowledge base that better reflects the micro-level, organisational realities of coach

education; one where coach educators' efforts to obtain, maintain and advance the support, trust, and engagement of others is integral to the achievement of a variety of personally and professionally valued outcomes (Cassidy et al., 2016; Jones & Wallace, 2005).

Methodology

Reflecting our interpretivist and interactionist orientation to inquiry (Potrac, Jones & Nelson, 2014; Toner, Nelson, Potrac, Gilbourne & Marshall, 2012), we drew upon Kelchtermans's (1993a, 1993b, 2009) narrative-biographical approach to data generation and analysis.

Through the fusion of biographical research and narrative inquiry, this methodology allowed us to examine how individual coach educators variously experienced, and gave meaning to, their respective professional practice and career experiences (Kelchtermans, 2009a, 2009b; Huggan, Nelson & Potrac, 2015; Purdy & Potrac, 2016). Rather than positioning careers as "the chain of possible and actually acquired hierarchical positions", the emphasis was on exploring an individual's subjective experiences of working roles over time, inclusive of the decisions that an individual makes, and the impact these are considered to have on his or her workplace identity (Kelchtermans, 2009a, p. 29). This project was, then, chiefly concerned with exploring a "politics of identity" in coach education work, inclusive of the "continuity between [the] past, present, and as yet unrealised future" selves of our participants. While the focus of narrative-biographical inquiry is very much on individual experience, it is important to recognise that the insights gleaned can "tell us as much about society and culture as they do about a person" (Riessman, 2008, p. 105). That is, the tales people tell are social artefacts that can help us understand how cultural expectations and demands inform, and are informed, by social actors and the relationships that exist between them (Huggan et al., 2015; Jones, 2009; Riessman, 2008)

Sampling and Participant Recruitment

Criterion-based and network sampling techniques were utilized to purposively recruit participants for this study (Gray, 2018; Patton, 2002, 2015). Individuals were deemed eligible to participate in this study if they were a) aged 18 years or older, b) were currently employed as a coach educator by the Football Association (F.A.) in a full-time or part-time role, and/or c) had worked for the F.A. as a coach educator for a minimum of two years. For the purpose of this study, a coach educator was defined as an individual who had a paid role in delivering formal coach education and continuing professional development (CPD) programmes (McQuade & Nash, 2015). That is, their work primarily entailed “leading and supporting [coach learning] in both classroom and practical environments” and, relatedly, assessing and certifying the progress of coach learners (McQuade & Nash, 2015, p. 341).

Following the receipt of institutional ethical approval, the lead author began the process of participant recruitment. This entailed the lead author drawing upon his existing network of coach education contacts in the North-East of England, which he had developed as a practicing coach over an 8-year period (Josselson, 2013). Prospective participants were made aware of the aims and objectives of the study, the commitment that their participation would require, and how data would be collected, analysed, stored and subsequently utilised. The final sample consisted of four coach educators, who provided written informed consent to participate in the study. A brief biography for each of the coach educators is provided below with pseudonyms used to protect their anonymity:

Andy was 59 years of age and had been employed as an FA coach educator for 18 years. He worked on a part-time basis and was responsible for delivering FA Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 coach education courses. Prior to becoming an FA coach educator, Andy played semi-professional football and had managed a youth football coaching academy for 20 years.

Brian was 51 years of age old and had been an FA coach educator for 15 years. His main responsibilities were delivering FA Level 1, Level 2 and Level 3 coach education courses and FA Youth Award Modules. Before becoming a coach educator, Brian had a long and successful professional football career. He had a keen interest in coaching, which started when he was 28 years of age and entailed working with young footballers in his hometown.

Carol was 27 years of age and had been employed as a part-time FA coach educator for two years. Her duties as a coach educator principally focused on the delivery of FA Level 1 and FA Youth Module coaching awards. Prior to becoming a coach educator, she worked for a community-based football coaching company for nine years, and then obtained a full-time job with the FA. This entailed working with boys and girls aged 5-11 years her local community.

Dean was 58 years of age and had been employed as a part-time FA coach educator for 8 years. His main responsibility was delivering the FA Level 1 coaching award. He combined his work as a coach educator with a full-time job in another industry. Before becoming a coach educator, Dean spent several years coaching recreational children's football teams and had worked with youth team footballers at his local professional club.

As indicated above, the participants were employed to variously deliver various coaching qualifications in their respective counties (geographic regions). These programmes were generally delivered through intensive 2 to 5 day long courses, which were managed and led by the coach educators. The coach learners then practiced the ideas and approaches presented in the course in their own coaching environments for between 6 and 12 months. Following this, the coach learners then attended a final assessment weekend where the coach educators assessed whether the coach learners had a) completed all relevant course tasks to the required level and b) demonstrated the practical competency appropriate to the specific level of qualification.

Data Generation

Given its focus on the description and interpretation of individuals' career experiences, Kelchtermans (2009a, 2009b) approach to inquiry utilises in-depth, cyclical interviews as the chosen means of generating data. Based on the outcomes of initial pilot work, the interview guide utilized in this study focused on a) identifying who the participants had to interact with in their role as a coach educator, b) exploring how and why they attempted to generate positive working relationships with these individuals and groups, and c) considering the emotional dimensions of their strategic interactions with others.

The main interviews for this study were conducted by the lead author and took place at times and locations that suited the participants. This was especially important in terms of helping them to feel comfortable and relaxed in their surroundings so that they could engage positively with the interview process (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In order to facilitate the rigour of this study, a range of question types were employed (Seale, 2018). These included behaviour and action questions (i.e., questions about those specific events that the coach educators had observed), experience questions (i.e., questions that prompted the coach educators to share stories), motive questions (i.e., questions that asked the coach educators what had contributed to their thinking, feeling, and acting in certain ways), feeling questions (i.e., questions that asked the coach educators to describe those emotions that accompanied their thoughts and actions), example questions (i.e., questions that required the coach educators to provide instances that were illustrative of the point that they were seeking to convey), and timeline questions (i.e., questions that asked the coach educators to articulate the order in which events occurred) (Patton, 2002; Tracy, 2013).

A variety of clarification probes were also used to further explore any points that were unclear or open to misunderstanding during the interview process (Patton, 2015).

Specifically, detailed orientated probes were utilized to enhance the descriptions and insights

shared by the participants (Sparkes & Smith, 2013). These included questions such as “When did that happen?” “Who was with you?” “How did you feel about that?” or “Where did you go then?”. Similarly, elaboration probes were also employed to elicit more in-depth responses about a particular point raised in an interview (Merriam, 2014). This involved using phrases such as “Why is that?” “Could you expand on that?” or “Could you tell me more about that?” Finally, clarification probes were used to explore any points or issues that were open to misunderstanding or were unclear. These include questions such as “Could you describe that event for me again?” and “When you said X, what exactly did you mean?” The second and each following cycle of interviewing adopted a similar approach to questioning but was used to further explore, probe, and refine those experiences, insights, and interpretations shared in each preceding round of interviews (Nelson, Potrac, & Groom, 2014; Gale et al., in press).

In total, 40 interviews were conducted. Each interview lasted between 90-120 minutes, with approximately 20 hours of audible interview data being generated for each participant. A total of 80 hours of interview data were produced and transcribed verbatim. The participants were provided with a copy of their respective interview transcripts so that they could confirm its accuracy in terms of the words spoken, the information shared, and, importantly, the meanings that they attached to their respective accounts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Smith & McGannon, 2018). None of the participants responded with additional contextual information or asked for their respective transcripts to be altered.

Phronetic Iterative Data Analysis

We adopted a phronetic iterative approach to our analysis and interpretation of our data set (Kelchtermans, 2009a; Tracy, 2018). This abductive process alternated between 1) data generation, 2) the emergent reading of the data, and 3) consulting relevant theoretical frameworks (Kelchtermans, 2009; Tracy, 2018). The moving back and forth between these

three phases continued until the focus of the analysis attended to the research purpose in a way that we believed key audiences would deem significant and original (Tracy, 2018). Following each interview, the lead author (re)read the interview transcripts in order to develop an empathetic understanding of the participants' experiences. He also engaged in regular dialogue with the rest of the research team about what he considered to be the promising and relevant directions and places to focus our investigative efforts. These collaborative conversations were particularly useful for sharpening and strengthen the ongoing generation and analysis of data, as they provided an important opportunity for developing, challenging and refining our interpretations of what happened in the participants' lifeworlds (Tracy, 2018).

The lead author then engaged in *primary cycle coding* (e.g., 'who', 'what', 'when', and 'where'), which included using first-level descriptive codes to capture the essence of the data set (Tracy, 2019). Following this, the lead author then moved onto *secondary cycle coding* (e.g., 'how', 'why', and 'because'). This entailed the considering theory and literature that best illuminated the participants' understandings of their respective workplace experiences (Tracy, 2018). This principally involved the use of Kelchtermans and colleagues (e.g, Kelchtermans 2005, 2009; Kelchermans & Ballett, 2002a, 2002b) research addressing professional identity and micropolitical literacy, Goffman's (1959) classic text on the presentation of the self in everyday life, and, finally, Hochschild's (1983, 2000) ground-breaking work addressing the presentation and management of emotions in contemporary social life. During secondary-cycle coding, the lead author grouped smaller first-level codes together into a hierarchical category, identified codes that were a consequence of another, and examined how the codes attended to our previously developed research questions (Tracy, 2019). Throughout both coding phases, codes and data were regularly reviewed (and modified) to avoid definitional drift (Gibbs, 2018). Furthermore, by engaging in this

analytical process throughout data collection, we were able to develop a ‘follow-up’ list of questions to ask in each cycle of interviews (Tracy, 2018).

We also found the act of writing this research paper to be an important way of thinking and knowing (Richardson & Adams St. Pierre, 2018). Throughout this research project, we produced and recrafted analytical memos addressing micro-level meaning making and emerging social processes, developed analytical outlines that addressed how our data and theoretical interpretations contributed to the answering of our research questions, and we produced several iterations of this paper over time (Tracy, 2018). Through these writing practices, we were able ‘reflect on, to alter, [and] to reconsider’ our interpretation of the research findings (Madden, 2010, p. 156). Indeed, writing supported the sharing of new reading material and theoretical understandings, as well as providing the opportunity to air, debate and refine our conceptual sense-making (Gale et al., 2019).

Theoretical Framework: An Interactionist-Dramaturgical Perspective

In this study, the theorising of Kelchtermans and colleagues (e.g., Kelchtermans 2009a, 2009b; Kelchtermans & Ballett, 2002a, 2002b), Goffman (1959) and Hochschild (1983, 2000) were combined to form our interpretive framework. Kelchtermans and colleagues interactionist work has provided important insights into the micropolitical learning and actions of educators and educational leaders. At the core of his inquiry are the concepts of professional self-understanding, micropolitical literacy and action, and structural vulnerability. Professional self-understanding refers to ways in which practitioners perceive or assesses themselves in their professional role. Importantly, this understanding is not just based on the self-evaluation of perceived qualities and capacities at a particular point in time. Instead, it incorporates how an individual believes other (important) people think about and judge their in-role performances. Kelchtermans (2005, 2009a, 2009b) identified five components that comprise an educator’s professional self-understanding. These are self-

image (i.e., the way an individual typifies his or her self as an educator), self-esteem (i.e., an individual's appreciation of his or her job performances as an educator), job motivation (i.e., the motives or drives that make an individual want to pursue or leave a career as an educator), task perception (i.e., an individual's idea of what constitutes his or her professional programme, inclusive of the tasks and duties associated with doing a good job as an educator) and future perspectives (i.e., an individual's expectations about their future career trajectory as an educator). Micropolitical literacy refers to the ability of an individual to 'read' and 'write' him or her self into the political and inter-personal realities of the organisational landscape (Kelchtermans, 2009a, 2009b; Kelchtermans & Ballett, 2002a, 2002b). Relatedly, micropolitical action is concerned with the proactive and reactive strategies that an individual may engage in to establish, safeguard, restore or advance desired working conditions. Finally, vulnerability is concerned with the ways in which educators' work is characterised by ambiguity and pathos. That is, educators "never have full control over the situation, nor over the outcomes of" their decisions and (inter)actions" (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 999). Central to this concept, then, is the acknowledgement that educators can "never fully prove the effectiveness" of their actions and, as such, their workplace efforts "can always be questioned" by various contextual stakeholders (Kelchtermans, 2005, p. 999; Kelchtermans, 2011).

While Kelchtermans and colleagues work provides an insightful lens for understanding the micropolitical thinking and actions of educators, it does not provide a rich interpretation of the interpersonal strategies that a person may employ to protect, maintain, advance or repair their professional identity. We, therefore, chose to supplement the theoretical ideas of Kelchtermans with the Goffman's dramaturgical theorising. His text addressing the *Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1959) is recognised as making a ground-breaking contribution to our understanding of how, in the quest to fulfil

societal and organisational expectations, individuals frequently “play roles, negotiate situations, and to a larger extent are forced to be actors” (Marsh, Keating, Eyre, Campbell, & McKenzie, 1996, p. 73; Jones et al., 2011). In this book, Goffman’s nuanced analysis of everyday social life provided rich empirical and conceptual insights into how individuals and groups seek to present themselves to others, the tactics they utilise in an attempt to manage the impressions they give off, and, relatedly, protect or advance the version of the self that is exhibited to others (Cassidy et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2011). At the heart of Goffman’s dramaturgical writings is the view that individuals are not completely free to choose the version of the self that they wish to have others accept (Jones et al., 2011). Rather, they are obliged to “define themselves in congruence with the statuses, roles, and relationships that they are accorded by the social order” (Brannaman, 2000; p. xlvii). Importantly, however, he argued that our thoughts, actions and feelings are not entirely determined by society. We are not the passive recipients of socialisation. We are, instead, able to manipulate social encounters and situations strategically, especially in terms of the impression that others form of us. While Goffman’s work provides an insightful, critical analysis of the defensive strategies that individuals may utilize in their everyday interactions with others, his work does not substantively address the emotional dimensions of impression management.

Influenced by the dramaturgical writings of Goffman, Hochschild’s (1983, 2000, 2003) theorising charts the interplay between impression management, social interaction and emotion (Potrac & Marshall, 2011). Indeed, in her now classic text, *The Managed Heart*, Hochschild illuminated the relationship in the workplace between the emotions that an individual may feel and those that are acted out for the benefit of others, inclusive of the consequences of such performances. At the heart of her work are the concepts of emotion management and emotional labour, surface acting and deep acting, and feeling rules and display rules. For Hochschild (2000, p. 7), emotion management is concerned with how a

social actor seeks to manage their emotions and “create publicly observable facial and bodily display” for the consumption of others. Relatedly, emotional labour refers to emotional management that is undertaken as part of their employment; it is sold or exchanged for a wage. Display rules refer to when and how particular overt expressions of emotion should occur, while feeling rules address the specific emotions that an individual should experience in a specific situation. Similarly surface acting is concerned with the language and paraverbal communication a social actors uses to deceive others in terms of the emotions that they are feeling, while deep acting addresses the “conscious mental action” that an individual may use to generate and believe in the emotion that he or she wishes to express to others (Hochschild, 2000, p. 36). Importantly, Hochschild argued that, as a consequence of our socialisation experiences, we learn what emotions are appropriate or inappropriate in particular social settings and situations. She suggested that the failure to demonstrate to others the emotions that are expected in a particular circumstance can negatively impact upon their evaluation of us and, importantly, the ways in which they responsively treat us (Hochschild, 1983, 2000). In summary, then, we believe the integration of the sense-making frameworks outlined above has much to offer to the critical examination of the everyday realities of coach educators’ work.

Results and Discussion

Our analysis of the interview data led to the production of two interrelated categories that addressed the participants’ workplace interactions and relationships with a variety of key contextual stakeholders (regional managers, fellow coach educators, and coach learners). The first concerned the importance the participants attached to developing a positive reputation in the eyes of their respective employers and how this was considered to be integral to their sustained employment and career progression. In a related vein, the second theme explored how the participants strategically attempted to construct a desired reputation through their

interactions with fellow coach educators and coach learners during the delivery of coach education programmes. What follows, then, is an interpreted thematic discussion of what we consider to be the important aspects of the participants' workplace interactions and identity management.

Obtaining and Sustaining Work as a Coach Educator: "Creating the Right Impression in the Eyes of Those Who Matter"

The participants reported how they attached considerable store to their identity as a coach educator and were cognitively and emotionally invested in its development, protection and advancement. At the heart of their thinking, was the need to construct a positive reputation in the eyes of various regional managers, who were ultimately responsible for allocating workloads to coach educators. For the participants, this reputation was generated through their direct engagements with their managers, as well as in-directly through the reports and feedback that other coach educators and, indeed, coach learners provided to these managers about the participants' workplace performances. Importantly, the inability to create and maintain an idealised impression of the self (Goffman, 1959) in the eyes of these significant others was seen as tantamount to failure; this was manifested through the low (or no) allocation of delivery hours on coach education programmes to them by these managers. Indeed, the failure to obtain enough hours was considered to be detrimental both in terms of their earnings and their desire to pursue a 'career' in this industry. For example, Brian and Carroll noted:

The relationships I have built with the County FAs have been the most important thing to keep obtaining work, I think... I think I have built up a very good relationship with many people in different counties, now I know that they come to me for work in those areas even though there are educators that live closer than me that they could use but they come to me because I am reliable and have got a good reputation of educating coaches well through my knowledge and personality... I'm trying to keep my relationships with the County FAs because I want work from them another time. It's important to keep work coming my way. (Brian)

You do hear stories about other tutors that County FAs have used, and they had gotten a name for themselves, so they got rid of them... I don't want a bad reputation... I don't want to be talked about by other members of the FA because

I have gotten a bad name for myself. Reputation is key... After my first full year as a coach educator I emailed the County FA Chief Executive at another County FA to ask if I could deliver courses... He replied saying, "Yes no problem, I will put you on our tutor list". So, I was happy, but then the courses for the year came out in that County FA and I wasn't down to deliver any. I was a little disappointed, but I had six from the County FA I already deliver for, so it wasn't a big deal. Then I attended a CPD event and this chief executive was at the course, so I went up to him and asked him, "Why wasn't I put on any courses to deliver?" He turned round to me and said, "I didn't realise you were the woman that emailed me, I thought it was someone else from your county". He then said, "Don't worry; I will sort something out because I want you delivering for our County FA because I have heard very good things". And he did, I am down to deliver in the summer for them... People in coach education circles hear about you, they know about you. So that's why it's so important for me to maintain and enhance my reputation. (Carol)

Interestingly, the participants highlighted how the desire to develop a positive reputation in the field was something that they had learned implicitly through interaction with, and observations of, their line managers and more experienced coach educators. It was not a topic that featured in their professional preparation programme or any Continuing Professional Development (CPD) activities. They also described how the construction of a positive reputation was generated through the 'persona' that they presented to significant others over time and entailed purposively and reflexively managing their interactions with others towards desired reputational ends. Here, for example, Dean and Carol noted:

My self-image is the most important aspect of being a coach educator. People have to trust me, the County FA, the candidates and my colleagues. I have to portray that professionalism in everything I do... My image must be friendly, approachable... So, by portraying this image, it 'fits' with everything... I guess the biggest thing I have learned through experience is that I can't always say what I feel because it can offend people and revealing my own thoughts in the wrong manner can sometimes be detrimental to my position and my reputation... The thing is you have to show this image even if you don't actually feel like it at the time. It's important that I 'look' professional in front of the right people, and that's definitely when I'm delivering the courses or on a CPD (continuous professional development) course... I want to keep my role, so I make sure that I do the right things and say the right things by being professional. (Dean)

No one formally told me about this. Over time, I learned that the perception of everyone involved has to be right. I have to be seen as doing the right thing, and doing my job properly because in front of everyone I have to portray the correct image... I'm under the microscope... When I feel like that, I have to manage what I do correctly, and keeping my thoughts, feelings, opinions to myself... If I don't manage them correctly then that's when I'm going to get in trouble because all it

takes is for me to say or act on something I shouldn't, and it will get back to the County FA and could damage my reputation. Luckily, so far, this has never happened because I'm always making sure that if I feel disinterested, I make sure I act appropriately in front of everyone. This is behaving professionally and in the right way all of the time and performing my job roles to the best of my ability. If I don't do that then people will know because there are too many people out there that see what I do, and it's so easy for it to get back to the County FA and my bosses within the FA. (Carol)

One of the participant's, Andy, shared his first-hand experience of the reputational damage that he experienced as a consequence of his inability to control the outward expression of anger and frustration in an engagement with one of regional manager. The outcome of this exchange was particularly problematic for Andy, as he believed he was not allocated any course delivery hours in that manager's region as a consequence of it. Specifically, he noted:

Me and the [County FA manager] fell out... Unfortunately, it affected my role as an educator... One of my friends, who worked for the County FA, knew of my problems and stress at the time, as my mother-in-law had suddenly passed away. So, he had said that he would take the computer in for me to the guy I had fallen out with. [The County FA manager] then replied to my friend saying "No you won't, he will bring it in" ... I'm thinking what a fucking tit!... So, I took it in to him and said, "Look mate, there are far more important things going on in this world, so take your computer and shove it up your arse!" ... I showed my true emotions as it was a difficult time personally... I knew it wasn't very professional. I was wrong to do that, I was annoyed, I was stressed... It was a shame really after all the excellent relationships I had built up, and this idiot spoilt it on something that wasn't even related to coach education... I didn't work for that County FA for a very long time because of him. (Andy)

The extracts above highlight how the participants' critical reflections on the demands and nuances of organisational life contributed to their developing sense of micropolitical literacy (Kelchtermans & Ballett, 2002a, 2002b). Specifically, they provided clear evidence of their ability to both read and write themselves into dynamic social landscape of coach education work in football. For example, they highlighted how their organisational interests (i.e., access to work hours, positions and promotions) was tied to their socio-professional interests (i.e., their ability to construct and develop productive relationships with key organisational

stakeholders) (Huggan et al., 2015). In this case, generating and sustaining a reputation as a capable and reliable educator in the eyes of regional managers was essential to the development of working conditions that the participants considered to be professionally and personally satisfying (Kelchtermans & Ballett, 2002a, 2002b).

The participants' insights also demonstrated how others' feedback and evaluations of their working practices and interactions was integral to the development of their reputation (or identity) as a coach educator. Indeed, their thoughts about appropriate role performance were not only informed by their own opinion of their working qualities and capacities, but also by their considerations of how others appeared to evaluate and responsively treat them in their working role. The participants' shared outlook clearly connects with Kelchtermans' (2005) writings regarding the construction and maintenance of an individual's professional self-understanding. Specifically, others' feedback appeared to play an important role in terms of how they considered their respective self-image (i.e., the ways in which they typified themselves as coach educators), their job motivation (i.e., their desire to become and remain coach educators), their self-esteem (i.e., their appreciation of their in role performance) and their future perspectives (i.e., their thoughts, hopes and fears about their career trajectory and identity as a coach educator) (Kelchtermans, 2005; Huggan, Nelson, & Potrac, 2015).

The participants' micropolitical literacy extended beyond the reading themselves into occupational and organisational landscape (Kelchtermans, 2005). It also included proactively engaging in micropolitical action, especially in terms of managing the 'front', or version of themselves, that they presented to those others who comprised their working networks (Goffman, 1959). This entailed iteratively managing and calculatedly conveying impressions of the professional self both in, and through, their interactions with others (Goffman, 1959; Potrac, Gearity, Nicholl, Morgan & Hall, in press; Schulman, 2017). Indeed, Andy's failure to conform to dominant occupational display rules (i.e., for subordinates to show respect to

superiors) in a heated exchange with his regional manager, clearly illustrated how he had learned that the failure to provide observable bodily and facial displays that demonstrate the requisite attributes of his role to a scrutinising audience (i.e., a regional manager) was problematic. In this case, the impression of self given off by Andy had a significant impact on the way he was responsively treated by this manager (Goffman, 1959; Hochschild, 1983, 2000).

Delivering FA Coach Education Provision: “Perform Well in Front of the Candidates and Co-tutors”

In further elaborating on how they sought to generate their desired professional persona, the participants also described how they actively sought to manage their interactions and relationships with colleagues and coach learners when delivering coach education programmes. While they generally found their interactions with these others to be positive and fulfilling, they were not socially, emotionally and reflexively undemanding. Here, the participants shared their fears of being seen to perform poorly or inadequately in front of this audience, something that could result in reputational damage. For example, Carol and Dean noted:

In my first year as a tutor, I worked with five different other coach educators... I think it was because they had the experience, that I felt that they were more knowledgeable about the course than I was, especially with how the course ran... I was quite nervous to be fair. I expected my first delivery to be hard... I think it was more nerves than anything; I was out of my comfort zone. I was apprehensive of the timings and stuff... I perceived myself as I'm still learning and take on-board what they do and take my own things from that... Maybe they may have seen me as an 'equal' but that's how I perceive myself. So, I tended to stand back and play a lesser role. I thought it was better to do a little bit really well than try and do too much and make a load of mistakes. I didn't want to make a big splash for the wrong reasons. That wouldn't have been a good start! (Carol)

When I walk into a new course, I can't show them how much I'm shitting myself before the course begins, so I make sure I'm enthusiastic and try and open with sarcasm and humour to settle me down more than anything... It is an uncomfortable experience and I want to perform well in front of the candidates and co-tutors. If I showed them that I was anxious about how the course went, I wouldn't gain their trust straight away, and that's massively important. I have to get them on side as

early as possible in order for them to engage in the course... When I turn up to a course, I make sure I'm there extra early in order to set up, because I feel that if I'm prepared then that will make me less nervous, but I'm still apprehensive. I get that tight, knotted feeling in my stomach because I want the course to go well and make sure everyone learns something from the course and enjoy it more than anything. That's the worry for me I guess... It's the days leading up to it when it's the worst, I'm thinking about how I want the course to go, and make sure everything is spot on with the preparation. I dread it to be fair and think why I accepted to do it; I could have had a weekend off. You worry about the outcomes and the evaluations, but once I'm there that all goes, and I enjoy the interaction we have with the candidates. (Dean)

The participants also highlighted how their dealings with colleagues were not always unproblematic. Sometimes the delivery of a course did not go as intended. Here, the participants identified issues that included co-tutors deviating from an agreed plan of delivery or engaging with coach learners in ways that the participants did not feel was conducive to learning. For the participants, such events entailed maintaining a situationally appropriate 'front' and hiding their true thoughts and feelings:

I was doing one session, and we had split the group into two, [his co-tutor] took half, I took half. I know that on a Level 1 course, for the candidates to pass the course all they need to do is the basics. So, when I delivered the sessions to them, to show them how it's set up and done, I coach the absolute basics to make sure they understand that this is how they should coach to pass the course. That's what we had agreed to do. However, on this occasion, he kept sending a candidate across from his group to my group and this candidate told me that [the co-tutor] wanted me to progress it more and show different progressions... I said, "Yeah no worries". So, I introduced the different progressions... But underneath it I was thinking it's all well and good because I could cope with this, but how are these inexperienced coaches going to deal with it? It got very complicated for their level... I also wondered why he was doing this. It wasn't our plan. Was he trying to look better than me? I don't know but that type of thing does happen. I'm stood there thinking 'for fuck sake, why are you doing this? You're being a ****. This is an absolute mess', but I couldn't say that at the time because all the candidates are there and it would look totally unprofessional. He kept sending people across and they obviously were asking me if I had introduced something that he wanted. Because they had shouted it loud enough, I had to then introduce it to the group. I was angry, but I didn't want them thinking that they had missed out on something the other group had done. That wouldn't have been good for my end of course feedback and evaluation. It definitely made me more wary of him. (Dean)

This candidate's session had started, and you could tell already [the co-educator] wanted to get in and show his knowledge, but I believe there is a way of doing it and there is a way of giving the candidate a chance to actually coach. Anyway, this candidate had travelled all the way from the opposite side of the country and he

was a good coach, worked at a professional club, and he started the session off and I'm thought 'This is a good positive start this', next thing [his colleague] stopped his session and said, "No, no, no", stopped it, and then for the next 25 minutes delivered the session. The poor candidate just stood there like a plank next to him. Then he started dragging the candidate around with him as he coached, and it was like he was his fucking shadow. At the end of it the coach educator turned around and said, "There you go son, that's helped you hasn't it?" ... I believed he had embarrassed the candidate in front of everyone and that was an unfair technique of how to educate coach learners... I remained quiet in order to maintain my working relationships with him and the group as a whole. The potential consequences of causing conflict would have probably damaged my working relationship with him and made us collectively look a shambles in front of those taking the course...I chose not to say anything... Plus I knew any fall-out from the candidate would be his concern, not mine... I didn't want to be the one seen responsible for creating a scene. That wouldn't have gone down well at 'headquarters'. (Brian)

Such problematic encounters were not limited to their interactions with colleagues.

The participants also described how they had to also actively manage their interactions with the coach learners attending the courses they delivered. This included hiding various emotions (e.g., anger and frustration), generating and showing other emotions (e.g., enthusiasm and happiness), and being 'seen' to manage dissenting voices in fair and calm manner. Carol and Greg provided the following examples:

There was one coach [candidate] who did an under 9s team and it was a FA Level 1 and I mentioned about fundamental warm-ups and he posed a question about the types of warm-ups we were demonstrating and why the players couldn't simply run a lap or two of the training pitch instead. He wasn't receptive to much of the work we did. It was kind of his way and nothing else. So, we gave him a reason why it would benefit his players to play a game of tag while balancing, instead of running around the pitch. Inside, though I wanted to really tell him that running around a pitch is so 'old school' and that he needed to start opening his mind to new techniques...that he was a dinosaur...and he was doing my head in. But I couldn't do that because it's very unprofessional... I dealt with it by calmly asking him a question of, "How is it beneficial to run two laps of the pitch?" and he didn't know what to say. (Carol)

I delivered on one course, there were 11 learners on it, and me and another educator delivered it. They had to take the course as part of another programme of activity and not one of the learners seemed to really want to be there; their interest wasn't there from the outset. I just had to try and engage them as best as I could.... It's an easy enough course, but after that first day all they were doing was taking the piss out of each other and they lost focus on every task we did very quickly... So, we sped up the theoretical tasks and got them out on the pitch quicker so that they could play football and I engaged them that way... I wasn't looking forward to the next day with them because it was a struggle that first day. Obviously, I didn't

show that I was disheartened and discouraged about the whole thing. I was just not as ‘up for it’ on the inside as I would be on other courses, I guess. But when I got there, I showed enthusiasm, and I did the job to the best of my ability... It was important my body language showed enthusiasm and I looked positive. I thought back to a previous course of how my enthusiasm affected the candidates and I really enjoyed how it seemed to rub off on them. I used that to make me feel right for this group... In the end we got through the course and everyone passed, so I had done my job. It was pleasing that they had all passed, but I was just glad it was over with really. I just wanted to get away from them. (Andy)

On one level then, the participants’ insights regarding their working interactions with colleagues and coach learners reflects Kelchtermans’s (2005, 2009, 2011) notion of vulnerability. Indeed, the extracts highlight the ways in which they did not feel in complete control of the various processes tasks and people that they felt accountable for (Kelchtermans, 1996, 2005, 2009, 2011). In seeking to manage these uncertainties as much as possible, the participants utilised a number of coping strategies that reflected their micropolitical literacy (Kelchtermans, 1996, 2005, 2009, 2011). That is, through their interactions, they actively sought to generate a ‘front’ that enabled them to cope with inopportune intrusions of colleagues and coach learners (Goffman, 1959) or the challenges presented by their own performance anxieties. For Dean, his significant investment in preparing for course delivery helped him to generate the desired front when the course began. Carol was equally aware of the need to present a front that did not show the anger and frustration she felt toward a ‘difficult’ coach learner. Similarly, Dean did not want to “cause a scene” by publicly challenging the deviation from an agreed session plan that was initiated by a coach educator whom he was working with (Goffman, 1959; Scott, 2015, p. 88). In each of these cases, the participants explained how they tried to avoid behaving in ways that may have disrupted the desired version of reality fostered or, indeed, led “the performance to grind to an embarrassing halt” (Scott, 2015, p. 88); outcomes not favourable to the reputation that the participants were actively seeking to generate, maintain and advance. Indeed, the participants recognised the importance for, and

demonstrated, considerable dramaturgical discipline (Goffman, 1959). That is, through the “careful management of their personal front” they sought “to appear nonchalant, while concealing the extensive work that they are doing to create this very impression” (Goffman, 1959; Scott, 2015, p. 88).

The participants also explained that the vulnerability that they experienced and actively sought to manage in the workplace was embodied; it was an emotional as well as a cognitive challenge (Kelchtermans, 2005, 2009, 2011). As evidenced in the data extracts above, their reading and engagement with actual, or potential, situational disruptions were variously experienced in terms of anxiety, anger, pride, relief or frustration (Kelchtermans, 2005, 2009, 2011). Dealing with these performance disruptions and uncertainties also necessitated that the participants engaged in skilled social performances, where hiding and showing situationally appropriate emotions was considered to be an integral feature of their everyday work (Potrac et al., 2017; Potrac, Smith & Nelson, 2017). In particular, they appeared attuned to situational display rules regarding when and how particular overt expressions of emotion should occur (Hochschild, 1983, 2000). For example, Brian and Carol was acutely aware of the need to avoid showing their anger or frustration to others (i.e., colleagues or coach learners). Similarly, Andy highlighted the need to show a ‘happy’ and ‘enthusiastic’ front when working with a group of disengaged coaches. In these examples, hiding and showing certain emotions was tied to appropriate and desired role performance (Hochschild, 1983, 2000).

The participants also provided examples of how they engaged in differing emotion management techniques; namely surface acting and deep acting (Hochschild, 1983, 2000). The former occurred when they sought to manage their body language and paraverbal communication (i.e., pitch, pace) to convince others of the emotion that they were experiencing. This included the ‘put on’ smile, the ‘fake laugh’, or a ‘calm’ exterior. Andy

also provided an example of deep acting, which occurs when an individual uses “conscious mental action” to believe in the emotion that he or she wishes to express to others (Hochschild, 2000, p. 36). Specifically, he transferred emotions from past positive situations to the problematic one he was encountering with the disengaged coaches in his quest to feel as well as show his enthusiasm for working with them (Hochschild, 1983, 2000). Here, he utilised what Hochschild (1983, 2000) termed as exhortations to make himself feel particular emotions (e.g., he psyched himself up for working with this group of coaches). For the participants, then, work as a coach educator entailed much more than the routine application of pre-packaged knowledge and methods.

Conclusion

Our findings highlighted some of the micropolitical, relational, and dramaturgical features of coach education work. Indeed, this study has shed new light on the sophisticated sense of micropolitical literacy demonstrated by the participant coach educators and, relatedly, some of the impression management strategies they utilised to create and sustain a desired professional identity. While we, of course, recognise that we were unable to explore ‘all’ of the dramaturgical and micropolitical dimensions of their work as coach educators, we hope that the integration of some of Kelchtermans’ (2005, 2009), Goffman’s (1959) and Hochschild’s (1983, 2000) theorising will provide a stimulus to further exploring and understanding the interactive and emotionally laden challenges that are an inherent feature of coach education. In reinforcing the work of Cushion et al. (2019), our findings suggest coach education work is a dramaturgical, “obligation driven social activity” (Jones et al., 2011, p. 26) that requires coach educators (individually and collectively) to consciously plan for and critically reflect upon how they present themselves and their ideas, choices, actions and emotions to others (Cassidy et al., 2016). For our participants, developing and maintaining an idealised image in the eyes of a scrutinising audience was not an easy facet of their

educational work; it was an embodied and dynamic challenge that required them to critically consider what they did, when, how and why in their efforts to influence the thoughts, feelings and actions of others. For us, their achievements were inextricably linked to the quality of their social engagements and practices (Cassidy et al., 2016; Potrac, Nelson & O’Gorman, 2016). We certainly believe that such relational and dramaturgical issues warrant consideration in future coach education research and, indeed, the professional preparation and development of coach educators (Potrac, Nicholl, & Hall, in press).

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